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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
24 May 1967

MEMORANDUM

Kosygin's Position in the Soviet Leadership

1. The forces tending to stability of personnel and cautious, middle-of-the-road policy seem still to dominate the Soviet hierarchy. This is not to say that a new system of shared authority has been devised and set in stone. There is considerable evidence of rough edges to relationships within the leadership. Furthermore, if expulsion and overt denigration have been avoided over the last two and a half years, there have been changes in the power positions of various of the top leaders.

2. Premier Kosygin has not been immune to these fluctuations. At times, his position has seemed secure, his freedom of action considerable, and his influence on policy great. At other times [REDACTED]

25X1

[REDACTED] His prospects have been hard to judge. Kosygin is no newcomer to top-level politics, but he is generally not considered to have the kind of power base that he can readily call upon in the face of a severe challenge. He is vulnerable, furthermore, to those who would seek a scapegoat--particularly if something

25X1

goes wrong with the national economy. On the other hand, his ability seems to have earned a general respect and his presence in the leadership gives it a competence that is valuable to the others in the Kremlin for practical reasons and for reasons of image.

3. Against this background, there have arisen several new factors which might affect Kosygin's position.

His Wife's Death

4. All accounts indicate that the taciturn Kosygin was deeply affected by his wife's death. Nevertheless, he carried on with his duties right to the end when he took his place on the May Day parade reviewing stand at about the same time his wife must have died. After the funeral he withdrew from public view for a week, but this was probably a normal period of mourning.

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[REDACTED] On 25 and 26 April, he was an active participant in the funeral of cosmonaut Komarov and he continued to appear in public right up to the time of his wife's death. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] it is quite likely that the pressures and strains under which he must operate will take their toll and thus reduce his capacity to hold his own in the constant political competition.

Reverses: The Defection of Stalin's Daughter and the Cosmonaut Disaster

7. The circumstance that this is the golden anniversary year of the Soviet state and that the accent is on maturity, unity, and accomplishment no doubt strengthens the urge among the Soviet leaders to preserve the political status quo. For these reasons also, Svetlana Alliluyeva's

25X1

defection and cosmonaut Komarov's crash must be especially bitter pills.

8. The practical effect on the top leadership of Svetlana's defection is not yet visible. As distressed as the leaders must be, they have thus far sought to avoid any public commentary. Only when pressed have Soviet diplomats trotted out even the routine accusations of CIA manipulation or have alleged that the defector was mentally unbalanced. As Svetlana's story is revealed, however, the drive to find a scapegoat for her defection may build. What person or group made the ultimate decision that allowed her to leave the country is unknown. She claims Kosygin approved her original exit visa and the extension of the visa she received while in India. It is likely that other high officials were involved, but Kosygin's technical (and perhaps real) responsibility leaves him vulnerable. Other Politburo members, however, may also find their positions weakened by the defection and Svetlana's revelations. It is fairly sure that the defection will have the over-all effect of worsening intra-Politburo relationships, but there is no way of telling at this point who will gain or lose.

9. As for the cosmonaut tragedy, if blame for it is to fall on anyone, it could as well be Brezhnev as Kosygin. If it was a case of political expediency winning out over

sound scientific judgment, as "well-informed sources" have told Western newsmen in the USSR, Brezhnev, in his eagerness to produce a dramatic anniversary event, seems more likely to have been the main mover than the deliberate Kosygin.

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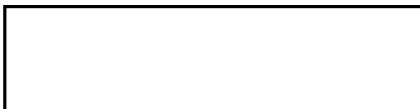
the potential rivals for Brezhnev's job at the head of the party are members of the inner group and Kosygin, who is probably not viewed by the group as an aspirant for the top post, may benefit by being at some distance from these subtle political maneuverings.

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Conclusion

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